

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS COMMITTEE
FOR
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-2016**

**Presented at the
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April 6, 2017**

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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Summary

The Press enjoyed an exciting year, garnering national recognition for a number of books, welcoming a new Executive Editor, and publishing and distributing 31 titles in a variety of formats.

Executive Editor Matt Becker joined the Press in July of 2015. Becker came to UMass from the University of Nevada Press, and prior to his time in Reno, he earned a PhD in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. During his years as the primary acquisitions editor at Nevada, Becker launched several innovative new series, signed many titles that diversified and strengthened Nevada's publishing program, and skillfully managed every aspect of the publication process. With his background and achievements, Becker is a strong asset to the Press.

Press Finances

After very strong sales in FY 2015, sales results in FY 2016 were less robust. According to data from the American Association of University Presses (AAUP), small presses comparable to UMass Press saw their fiscal year net revenue come in at eleven percent below their predictions. UMP net sales, totaling \$739,534, were modestly better than the national trend, at four percent less than the forecasted budget of \$767,000. In all, the Press published 28 new titles and distributed three titles. Through the fulfillment services of Johns Hopkins University Press, the Press shipped a total 39,576 volumes, a combination of frontlist and backlist titles. Ten percent of net revenue came from sales of e-books, a figure that aligns well with national averages of digital revenue as reported by the AAUP. The editorial staff did an excellent job in securing subventions and grants to support scholarly projects, and in FY 2016, the editors raised \$69,887 on a project-by-project basis. On the expense side of the ledger, the Press saw increases in some advertising co-op and service fees, and costs of shipping and paper, print and binding saw typical increases. Deriving from strong sales in FY15, the Press paid authors \$92,000 in royalties. Despite a decline in overall revenue, the Press met its payroll obligations and paid out \$14,980 in raises to employees. Overall, the Press staff continues to operate as frugally as possible.

Activities of the Press Committee

Throughout the year, the committee met three times to consider and approve projects and review the publishing program. In all, the staff presented 33 projects, including the winners of the Juniper Prizes for Fiction and Poetry (published in partnership with the UMass Amherst MFA Program for Poets and Writers) and the Grace Paley Prize in Short Fiction (published in cooperation with the Association of Writers and Writing Programs). All projects presented to the committee were approved.

At each meeting, Director Dougherty shared the latest news from the Press and circulated a report on marketing activities, and editors reported on their conference travel and campus activities. Throughout the year, Becker, Dougherty, and Halley traveled to academic meetings central to the Press's editorial program. Among them, they attended the annual conferences of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the American Studies Association, and the National Council on Public History. Halley continued his service on the Executive Board of the AAUP. He attended AAUP board meetings, participated in the annual conference, and represented small presses in a Mellon-funded exploration grant.

Before each meeting, committee members reviewed 200 to 300 pages of supporting materials, which described and evaluated the manuscripts under consideration and documented the process of peer review. The committee then discussed each project thoroughly, evaluating the scholarly merit of the proposed publications. In making its decisions, the committee took into consideration the recommendations of the acquisitions editors, series editors, and the written reports of at least two scholars in the field. Committee members frequently offered comments to be conveyed to the authors.

In arriving at projects to be brought before the committee, the Press editors pursued numerous engaging and innovative projects, and they reviewed just over 370 unsolicited proposals and manuscripts. The editors

evaluated each project in terms of quality, audience, financial viability, and appropriateness for the UMass Press list. In recent years, the Press has focused primarily on books in the field of American Studies broadly defined—books that explore the history, politics, culture, and environment of the United States—as well as works with a transnational perspective. It has benefited greatly from the contributions of series editors, and currently has 13 active series, including Public History in Historical Perspective and The Environmental History of the Northeast.

Awards and Honors

The Press enjoyed a tremendous year in terms of scholarly awards and national recognition. Award winners include:

- Cheryl Knott's *Not Free, Not for All: Public Libraries in the Age of Jim Crow* won two notable awards: the **Eliza Atkins Gleason Book Award**, presented by the American Library Association to honor the best book written in English in the field of library history, and the **2016 Lillian Smith Book Award**, established in 1966 to honor "those authors who, through their writing, carry on Smith's legacy of elucidating the condition of racial and social inequity and proposing a vision of justice and human understanding."
- Jessie Swigger's book, *"History Is Bunk": Assembling the Past at Henry Ford's Greenfield Village* received an **Honorable Mention** for the **2016 National Council on Public History Book Award**. This marks the sixth time UMass Press has received the Award or an Honorable Mention since the Council established the prize in 2005.
- Richard Judd's *Second Nature: An Environmental History of New England*, won the **2015 New England Historical Association James P. Hanlan Book Award**, presented annually to a New England author for a nonfiction book on any historical topic, time period, or geographic region.
- R. Bruce Stephenson was awarded the **John Brinkerhoff Jackson Book Prize of the Foundation for Landscape Studies** for *John Nolen, Landscape Architect and City Planner*, co-published with Library of American Landscape History.

In addition to winning awards, Press titles were broadly and favorably reviewed in scholarly journals. Throughout the year, 38 scholarly journals reviewed books from the Press, and the *Journal of American History* reviewed nine UMass Press titles. Among the periodicals that review books for acquisitions librarians, particularly for research libraries, the following gave our books positive appraisals: *Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, *Booklist* (The American Library Association), and *Choice Magazine*. *Choice* rated seven of our titles "Highly Recommended."

It was also a very good year for UMass Press books in the national and popular press. Two titles in particular received high-profile notice:

- *A Manner of Being: Writers on Their Mentors*, edited by Annie Liontas and Jeff Parker, was included on the prestigious list of **Poets & Writers Best Books for Writers** for 2015. Oriented toward the business world, *INC Magazine* included Parker and Liontas on its list of **"5 Management Books You Wish You Could Give Your Boss for the Holidays,"** and *Vanity Fair* included the title among its **Recommended Gifts** for the end of year holiday season.

- ***We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War***, by Doug Bradley and Craig Werner, has been featured in nationally broadcast radio interviews and numerous online and print articles, and was named the **Best Music Book of 2015** by *Rolling Stone Magazine*. The title sat atop a list of books published by acclaimed trade houses and large university presses. It was also deemed one of the **Best Nonfiction Books of 2015** by *Paste*.

Titles were reviewed or excerpted in diverse publications including *The Atlantic*, *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, and *The Los Angeles Review of Books*.

Last but not least, the Press marketing staff has engaged in increased local promotions. In collaboration with the Jones Library, the Press launched a series of readings, “UMass Press Reads at the Jones Library.” The presentations included the editorial team of *SOS: Calling All Black People*, the Grace Paley Prize Winner Carla Panciera, and the editors of the highly esteemed series Culture, Politics, and the Cold War. Well-attended and a boon to authors and audience, the events will continue next year.

Infrastructure Improvements

The Press contracted with Scribe, a vendor used by many university presses, implementing Scribe’s proprietary digital tools and workflow processes. Press staff received training in XML coding and production methods, which will enable streamlined design and typesetting, in-house production of e-books, and safe storage and future repurposing of files in new digital formats. The training effort was extensive, and the benefits will accrue for years to come. The implementation was funded by a grant from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement.

Background

Founded in 1963, the University of Massachusetts Press seeks to enhance the University’s stature as a top-tier research institution by publishing outstanding works of peer-reviewed scholarship. The staff also provides advice to faculty and graduate students on a wide range of publishing questions. Since its inception, the Press has sold over 2 million individual volumes. Today, it has more than 1,100 titles in print. Eight (8) employees, along with student interns and outside sales representatives, produce and market up to 40 new titles annually. The main offices of the Press are located in the East Experiment Station on the Amherst campus. There is also a satellite office at the University of Massachusetts Boston, staffed by an editor whose salary is funded by that campus.

For administrative, financial, and personnel matters, the Press reports to the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Editorially, it reports to the University Press Committee, which includes a faculty representative from UMass Boston.

The Press has developed a number of partnerships to assist with marketing and distribution. Its sales representatives include the Columbia Consortium (for bookstores in the continental United States), the Eurospan Group (United Kingdom and Europe), and East-West Export Books (Asia, the Pacific, and Hawaii). Warehousing and order fulfillment functions are handled on a contract basis by Hopkins Fulfillment Services, a subsidiary of Johns Hopkins University Press.

In an effort to make its books more widely available through libraries, the Press joined in the formation of the University Press Content Consortium (UPCC), which now provides participating institutions with unrestricted access to more than 21,000 titles from more than 90 academic publishers via Project MUSE (<http://muse.jhu.edu>), administered by Johns Hopkins University Press. The Press maintains numerous partnerships to place digital versions of its titles in university libraries. The Press’s e-books are available to individuals through Amazon, Apple’s iBookstore, and other e-book retailers.